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Diagram illustrating the evolution of the Chinese language:

- Old Chinese** (c. 12th century BC)
  - **Middle Chinese** (c. 9th century AD)
    - **Modern Chinese** (c. 17th century AD)
      - **Mandarin** (c. 17th century AD)
        - **Beijing Mandarin** (c. 17th century AD)
          - **Pekingese** (c. 17th century AD)
          - **Mandarin** (c. 17th century AD)
        - **Shanghai Mandarin** (c. 17th century AD)
          - **Shanghai** (c. 17th century AD)
          - **Mandarin** (c. 17th century AD)
      - **Cantonese** (c. 17th century AD)
        - **Cantonese** (c. 17th century AD)
        - **Mandarin** (c. 17th century AD)

Timeline markers: 21 BC, 221 AD, 581 AD, 960 AD, 1279 AD, 1644 AD, 1911 AD.

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